DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 273 309 JC 860 460

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TITLE The Business and Industry Center: A One-Stop Storefront Approach.
PUB DATE Oct 85
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the Fall Conference of the National Council for Occupational Education (Denver, CO, October 3-5, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Business Administration; Community Colleges; *Community Development; *Continuing Education; Continuing Education Centers; Economic Development; Inservice Education; *Job Training; *School Business Relationship; School Community Relationship; Small Businesses; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *El Paso Community College TX

ABSTRACT

In order to maximize its resources to fulfill its action-oriented mission and strong commitment to community and economic development, El Paso Community College (EPCC) developed a Business and Industry Center as a rapid response system for meeting the needs of the business and industry community. The Business and Industry Center offers a comprehensive range of services, including short- and long-term, credit and non-credit, and on- and off-campus courses; information services; and walk-in technical assistance. These services are provided through four functional components: (1) continuing education for business and industry, which includes business, management, industrial, real estate, computer skills, secretarial science, and word processing; (2) the Worker Training Institute, which offers college credit courses at business and industry sites; (3) Project 90, the Chamber of Commerce training clearinghouse; and (4) the Small Business Resource Center, a walk-in technical assistance center, catering especially to very small businesses, minority businesses, and women in business. These four components link with each other and the other departments of the college to effectively focus available resources to meet community goals. (EJV)

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THE BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY CENTER: A ONE-STOP STOREFRONT APPROACH

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IC 860 460

Presented at the Fall Conference of the
National Council for Occupational Education
Denver, Colorado
October 3-5, 1985

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THE BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY CENTER: A ONE-STOP STOREFRONT APPROACH

By Diane K. Troyer, Ph.D.

As a result of its action-oriented mission and strong commitment to community and economic development, El Paso Community College has developed a number of innovative delivery systems. In order to maximize college resources in meeting this mission, the Business and Industry Center was developed.

The primary thrust of the Business and Industry Center is its function as a **rapid response system** to meet the needs of the business and industry community in a one-stop, storefront approach. It has several key principles in its design.

1. It is planned as an integral part of the downtown campus to take full advantage of campus services and to avoid duplication.

2. It provides the added advantage of being within walking distance to the Chamber of Commerce, Industrial Development Corporation, City Planning Department, and other key coordination points.

3. It organizes all of the college resources and services related to business and industrial development into one location which provides coordination as well as visibility in the community.

The Business and Industry Center offers a comprehensive range of services. Courses are offered as short or long term, credit or non-credit, and on or off campus. It serves a clearinghouse function and acts as a ready information source to business and industry, the Industrial Development Corporation, the Private Industry Council, and the Chamber of Commerce. In addition, walk-in technical assistance is available to the small business client, industrial client, and others wanting information on education, training, and employment. This is particularly important in view of El Paso's role in the industrial development within the sunbelt.

The rapid response system which makes up the Business and Industry Center has four functional components which overlap and link with each other, as well as the other departments of the college:

1. Continuing Education for Business and Industry, which includes business, management, industrial, real estate, computer skills, secretarial science, and word processing.

2. Worker Training Institute, which is an alternative delivery system for college credit courses offered in business and industry sites.

3. Project 90, the Chamber of Commerce training clearinghouse, which is particularly critical for industrial development.

4. Small Business Resource Center; a walk-in, one-stop, technical assistance center for small business, with emphasis on the very small business, minority business, and women in business.

Continuing Education for Business and Industry

The Department of Continuing Education for Business and Industry provides a comprehensive range of non-credit courses as needed by business and industry in business, secretarial science, management, industrial and real estate areas, with links to language programs for business (Spanish and English as a Second Language). There are a variety of delivery modes and types of services offered through this department.

1. In-Plant Training: These include customized programs for company employees using equipment in the plant or business, such as management development, blueprint reading, conversational Spanish, and sheet metal.

2. Skills Training and Upgrading: These include short and long term skill areas; such as machine shop, tool and die, word processing, business computers, photography, and floral design.

3. Non-Credit Courses/Seminars/Workshops: These provide regularly scheduled, short-term adult education in small business, marketing, accounting, resume writing, and other areas.

4. Open-Entry Skills: English as a Second Language, needle trades, cashiering, electronics, and other areas have been designed for easy access for identified populations.

5. JTPA and Other Contracted Training: Medical assisting, typing, electronics, English as a Second Language, and other courses are provided in a number of areas, on and off campus, as needed for the Private Industry Council and other agencies.

6. American Management Association Extension Institute: The Business and Industry Center offers a certificate program using the AMA series of courses.

7. Texas Industrial Start-Up Programs: The Industrial Start-Up Program off-sets training costs for companies moving into or expanding within Texas. An example of this was the start-up and upgrade training for Tonka Toys, which was particularly important as there were few plastics technicians in the region.

Worker Training Institute

The Worker Training Institute provides the alternative delivery system for credit courses and programs offered at business and industrial sites. The Worker Training Institute has several unique features.

The Worker Training Institute has a comprehensive system of support for the employee, employer, and the instructor. It also has the capability of offering an entire associate degree program to the employee at the job site.

The design of the program has been critical. It provides customized content while meeting the standards of the credit course. This is accomplished by customizing terminology and equipment to meet company needs. Equally important

is its flexible delivery mode. Courses have been adopted to be taught in a traditional lecture/discussion setting via telecourse or as self-paced modules.

Along with the flexible delivery modes, flexible scheduling provides critical access to employees. Courses can be offered during lunch hours, before work, shift change, or immediately after work. This is particularly valuable for the single head of household who can attend a college class at work and avoid child care problems.

The comprehensive student services provided allows the sites to be integrated within the system and include delivery of audiovisual support, books, and instructional records.

Project 90

The third major component is Project 90, the Chamber of Commerce Training Consortium Clearinghouse. This unique program is funded jointly by members of the Consortium on Business and Industrial Education and Training of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce. Its major contributors have been the Upper Rio Grande Private Industry Council, the University of Texas at El Paso, and the local public school systems. El Paso Community College provides the leadership for the project, including the director's salary, use of a computer, and the project's location within the Business and Industry Center.

The goals of this project include:

- To maintain a profile of current training available in the region.
- To maintain and disseminate information for new industry on labor and training availability and support services.
- To function as a clearinghouse for education and training information, particularly that needed for strategic planning, economic development, and industrial recruitment.
- Project 90 recently published a survey of the training needs of business and industry in the six county service region.

Project 90 is an excellent example of how community agencies can work together to accomplish a common goal. Project 90 is an essential component of the Business and Industry Center and the rapid response capability of the educational community with comprehensive information on business and labor needs and sources.

Small Business Development Center

In the spring of 1984, El Paso Community College was selected as one of three (3) prototype programs by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, in cooperation with the Small Business Administration. This assistance has enabled the college to develop its Small Business Resource Center much more quickly than was originally planned. The Small Business Resource Center was developed as a one-stop, walk-in or shopping center approach to eliminate fragmented information to the small business person or to those considering owning their own business.

The Small Business Resource Center has since developed a more comprehensive range of services as a Small Business Development Center in conjunction with a subcontract with the University of Texas at San Antonio. The Small Business Center offers small business development courses and seminars with an emphasis on business skills and information taught in an applied fashion. Related to the development seminars are the pre-business workshops, which are aimed at those who have not yet made the commitment to enter into a small business. The Small Business Development Center has direct links with the Small Business Administration, the Minority Business Development Agency, the Chamber of Commerce's small business activity, and the City of El Paso's Small Business Assistance Programs.

In addition to the workshops and seminars, the Center staff provides one-on-one counseling and technical assistance to small business clients on a walk-in basis. Because of the information maintained in the Resource Center, the Small Business Center is able to provide the small business client with ready access to information and hands-on assistance.

The Small Business Development Center design as a storefront increased the accessibility of the services by minority business, women in small business, and small, sole or family run business. This accessibility, coupled with outreach and community linkages, has encouraged small business clients to use the Center.

Summary

The four major components which have been described link with each other and across other departments in the college and out to various community agencies. By centering this activity in one location, the Business and Industry Center has been able to provide rapid response to community needs, flexibility in the design of service delivery, and an identity which is visible and marketable within the community. Through this innovative approach, the available resources can be focused effectively in meeting community goals in the area of community and economic development.

For more information, please contact:

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Presented in October, 1985, "Coping with Changes in Occupational Education", The National Council for Occupational Education Fall Conference, Denver, Colorado.

(01/06/86)

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Junior Colleges OCT 3 1986